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## Editorial

# Resist the intensifying oppression of the Moro people

The Arroyo regime is further intensifying the oppression of the Moro people. The Moro people are today gripped by intense fear as a result of saturation drives against their communities, raids on their houses, and arbitrary arrests and torture of supposed terrorists among their ranks. The scheme of the Philippine National Police to implement a "Muslim ID" system will only curtail their civil liberties.

The Communist Party of the Philippines and the entire revolutionary movement roundly condemn the Arroyo regime's unbridled attacks on the Moro people's human rights. The reactionary regime's measures exacerbate the national oppression and prejudicial treatment of Moros and portray them as criminals, bandits and anti-social elements. As a result of such measures by the Arroyo regime, they are forthwith labeled as "terrorists." The Arroyo regime exploits and worsens prevailing erroneous anti-Moro ideas and culture, the better to carry out anti-Moro policies.

The Arroyo regime sacrifices the rights and welfare of the Moro

people in the name of anti-terrorism. It repeatedly uses the pretext of supposed "intelligence reports" stating that the Abu Sayyaf plans to follow the March 11 terrorist bombing in Madrid, Spain with a similar bombing in Metro Manila.

The Arroyo regime's insidious objective is to maintain fear and hysteria among the Filipino people to justify and generate sympathy for fascist measures against the Moros. Through them, the Arroyo clique seeks to get the additional votes it desperately needs in the coming election.

The Arroyo regime further worsens the national oppression of the Moro people. It is imperative for the Moro people to resist such measures by the Arroyo regime and defend their democratic and national rights and welfare. The Moro people must make the Arroyo regime feel the anger of a people suffering national oppression and



demand respect for themselves and their rights.

The Moro people also need to enjoy the support of the entire Filipino people for their struggle. To extend such support is to take a stand against the national oppression of the Moro people.

The Arroyo regime's attempts to repress and brutalize the Moros is an initial step by the reactionary state to eventually impose fascist repression on the entire Filipino people.

We must also guard against the Arroyo regime's sinister plans to use "terrorist" threats as a ruse for

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# Prominent human rights violations in the first quarter

**H**uman rights violations in the first quarter of 2004 were marked by the abduction, murder and harassment of candidates and members of progressive parties as campaigning for the May elections grew more frenzied. The most notorious case was the brutal murder in February of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro vice mayor Juvy Magsino, also a Bayan Muna mayoralty bet.

With the campaign against terrorism as pretext, repression against Moro and lumad communities and people also increased in March.

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steps it might undertake in the face of its probable defeat or, in anticipation of the people's intense resistance to massive and widespread electoral fraud, should it win "miraculously."

We must forge the broad unity of the Filipino people to frustrate the Arroyo regime's evil plans not only against the Moro people but against the entire

Filipino people as well. The solidarity and cooperation of Moro organizations with various progressive and democratic organizations of the Filipino people is of profound importance.

The Communist Party and the revolutionary movement fully support the forging of unity between Moro and non-Moro peoples. It fully supports the Moro people's struggle against the attacks of the Arroyo regime. **AB**



## Moros launch protests

Thousands of Moros strongly condemned the illegal arrest, abduction and detention of their fellow Moros recently in Metro Manila as part of the Arroyo regime's "campaign against terrorism". The Moros marched from various Muslim communities and held a prayer rally at the Quezon Memorial Circle at around 1:00 a.m. on April 6. One of those who attended was Islam convert and actor Robin Padilla. That same day, the Muslim Multi-Sectoral Movement for Peace and Development also led 7,000 protesters in Plaza Cabili, Bangolo, Marawi City.

Prior to this, Suara Bangsamoro nominee Almirah Ali Lidasan assailed the repression of her fellow Muslims through the Muslim ID System and other anti-Moro policies of the government. About 250 members of the Ulama League of the Philippines, an organization of Muslim religious leaders, also expressed their apprehensions. **AB**



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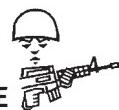
*Ang Bayan* welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news. Readers are likewise enjoined to send in their comments and suggestions for the betterment of our publication. You can reach us by email at:

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Nonetheless, military abuses attendant to intense militarization in the countryside continue without letup.

Following are some of the most prominent cases on record of human rights violations from January to April 1.

**April 1.** Five Moro civilians were illegally arrested and accused of being Abu Sayyaf members and of planning to detonate bombs in Metro Manila. Abduwil Villanueva, one of the arrested Moros, was beaten up and tortured into admitting that he was a terrorist and signing a document acknowledging ownership of explosives seized by the police in raids carried out in Makati and Quezon City.

**March 27.** Unidentified persons seized Mexico Transport Group leader Bong Manalili, in Mexico, Pampanga. Manalili has not been surfaced to date.

**March 26.** Operatives of the National Capital Region Police Office and Central Police Department-Special Weapons Action Team indiscriminately raided the Islamic Center in Ermin Garcia St., Quezon City, abducting two Moro women they accused of being terrorists.

**March 1-22.** The military abducted ten people from the adjacent municipalities of Tinambac, Goa and Lagonoy in Camarines Sur during pursuit operations against New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas who captured two soldiers in a tactical offensive on March 1 in Barangay Bataan, Tinambac.

First to be abducted on March 2 was Jaime Rodriguez, 60 and Isiderio de los Santos, both Bayan Muna organizers. This was followed by the abduction of Emilio de los Santos, Sonny de los Santos, Ariel Candelaria and Berning Abellana on March 5.

Elements of the 9th ID also seized Joel Guilan, 18, when they could not find his father Juanito whom they accused of being an NPA member. The soldiers covered the young Guilan's mouth and nose with a handkerchief until he lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness, he was tied up in a copra mill. He was released and then tied to a tree trunk.

**On March 16.** Wilfredo Velarde and Joseph Carlote were seized in Barangay Salvacion, Tinambac while working in Velarde's copra barn. Velarde's house was first ransacked in search of a high-caliber weapon he supposedly kept. When none could be found, Velarde was handcuffed and taken. Carlote was also brought along when Velarde's wife pleaded that Carlote accompany her husband.

The latest abduction was that of Domingo Mata on March 22.

**March 13.** Fifteen armed men abducted Anakpawis organizer Pedro Bueta, 54, in Barangay Buo, Magdalena, Laguna. He was surfaced only on March 20.

**March 10.** Elements of the 46th IB illegally arrested Anakpawis organizer Joy Batis Paloma, 17, in Barangay Hiluctugan, Carigara, Leyte. Joy was investigated for two days and released on March 12 after human rights organizations campaigned for her release.

**March 5.** A soldier sexually abused a 16-year-old girl while 42nd IB troops interrogated her fiancé Levy Caganda in their house in Del Carmen, Lagonoy, Camarines Sur.

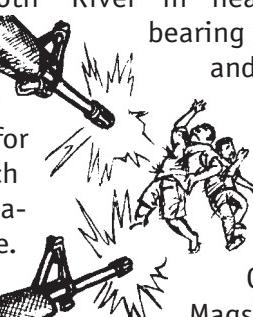
**March 2.** Maximo Pobadora, a barangay tanod, and Iluminado Troyo, a barangay councilor, were forced to serve as guides in a mili-

tary operation by the 19th IB and the PNP Regional Mobile Group. The livelihoods of residents of Barangays Wague, Cabungahan and Tag-abaca were also disrupted for more than a week when they were forced to evacuate because of the operation.

**February 21.** Bayan Muna organizers Jacqueline Paguntalan, 26 and Rolando Portaliza, 30, remain missing since four men believed to be elements of the Internal Security Unit seized them in Barangay Kilim, Baybay, Leyte. They were on their way to a Bayan Muna meeting when they were forced into a black van. One of their companions was able to escape and reported the incident. Prior to this, another Bayan Muna organizer was abducted by armed men in Can-avid, Eastern Samar in the first week of February.

**February 18.** Seven suspected military men abducted and summarily executed Anakpawis coordinator Edrian Aliaga in Sta. Cruz, Mindoro. He was forcibly taken from his house in Barangay Lumang Bayan, Sta. Cruz at around 2:30 a.m. By morning, his body was found floating in the Amnay River in nearby Sablayan town bearing multiple stab wounds and a bullet wound.

**February 13.** Naujan, Oriental Mindoro vice mayor and Provincial Justice and Peace Council chair Juvy Magsino was brutally murdered along with KARAPATAN-Oriental Mindoro Secretary-General Leima Fortu. They were shot aboard their vehicle in Barangay Pinasabangan-2, Naujan by motorcycle-riding henchmen of the Philippine Army 204th Brigade. Magsino was also a courageous human rights





lawyer and a candidate for mayor of Naujan under Bayan Muna.

**February 12.** Nine B'laan were illegally arrested, beaten up, butted with rifles, shamed and forced to admit to being NPA guerrillas when elements of the 66th and 39th IB found them sleeping inside a hut in Barangay Lamalis, Kidapawan, North Cotabato.

Flory Balilid was forced to strip while being butted with rifles and threatened with execution. Lucio Peles, her husband and six other B'laan were robbed of rice and other foodstuff and were forced to carry military equipment even though they had grown weak from the beatings. They were interrogated and set free only after signing a document stating that they were NPA members and that they were not maltreated by the military.

**February 8.** Elements of the 71st IB illegally detained Bayan Muna coordinator Teresita Abellera, in Lupao, Nueva Ecija.

**February 6.** Elements of the 31st Recon Company under 1Lt. Raul Vigo illegally ransacked the house of Florida Echalar in Sitio Buyuan, Barangay Tigbanaba, Igbaras, Iloilo.

The military also robbed the house of an uncle of Alyansa sang mga Mangunguma sa Igbaras organizer Meryl Eleccion. Eleccion was also harassed.

**February 2.** Elements of the 61st IB arbitrarily arrested, interrogated and detained Anakbayan member Isabel Necessario and Bayan Muna members Julia Tabat and Medardo Sayosa in Barangay Molobolo, Cauayan, Negros. Bullets and documents were planted in their possession. They were accused of being NPA guerrillas.

**February 1.** Elements of the 5th Infantry Division RSOT harassed Maricel Andaya, a resident of Pila East, Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur. She was being forced to divulge the whereabouts of her fiancé whom they accused of being an NPA member.



**January 27.** The Philippine Army 50th IB threatened and intimidated residents of Barangay Sapang and Sugay in Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur, forcing them to admit to being NPA supporters. The military imposed a curfew. Military operations were also launched in the barrios of Baracbac and Abaya in Galimuyod town. **AB**

## 32 out of over 300 political prisoners to be freed

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) has promised to release 32 political prisoners detained in various prisons in the country.

The releases slated between April 5 and May 4 form part of the confidence-building measures that GRP chief negotiator Silvestre Bello III relayed to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace panel on April 2. The two panels met in Oslo, Norway from March 30 to April 3 for talks, the second since formal peace negotiations resumed in February.

Among those to be released are seven women prisoners (three of them nursing mothers) and ten minors as well as elderly and ailing detainees. One of them is Zenaida Llesis, who was pregnant at the time of her capture in August 2002. Llesis gave birth to her daughter Baby Gabriela in the Bukidnon Provincial Jail in 2003. Llesis and Baby Gabriela both suffer from heart ailments.

Prior to this, NDFP peace panel chief Comrade Luis Jalandoni strongly assailed the GRP's failure to fulfill its commitment since 2001 to release the detainees. The political prisoners staged a hunger strike to demand their immediate freedom and express their indignation over the GRP's indifference to their plight. Zenaida Llesis was the first to go on hunger strike on March 29. She was followed on April 2 by nine other political prisoners in Quezon province and by 300 other political prisoners in various parts of the country who fasted until April 5.

Aside from the 32 prisoners whose freedom has been promised, there remain 278 other political prisoners in various prisons who have been purposely charged with criminal cases like murder and illegal possession of firearms to prevent them from posting bail and to mark them as criminals instead of political prisoners.

Following the latest round of clarifications between the NDFP and the GRP regarding the Supreme Court doctrine on the Amado V. Hernandez case, the GRP agreed with the NDFP's stand that those detained because of their political beliefs should not be categorized as criminals.



Zenaida Llesis and Gabriela



# Ambush in Camarines Sur

*On March 1, the NPA ambushed troops of the 42nd IB in Barangay Bataan, Tinambac, Camarines Sur. Various types of explosives were effectively used in this offensive to shock the enemy and cause its defeat more rapidly. Following is an account of what transpired.*

**I**t was almost one o'clock in the morning when the lookout positioned near the center of the barrio reported on radio. "It's already here," he said. "A truck."

The comrades in ambush position immediately went on alert. Those who had dozed off while waiting were roused. This was their fourth night in wait.

The guerrillas quickly put away their things and took cover in their respective positions. They could hear the roar of the oncoming truck. The comrades braced themselves. They awaited the blaster (explosives detonator) who would release the signal fire that would begin the offensive. The squads Kaloy and Baking were assigned to position themselves close to the road and pin down the enemy.

But suddenly the truck stopped roaring even before it could enter the area where the comrades were positioned. The soldiers began to move on foot.

The Red fighters were prepared for this shift in the situation. They waited for the enemy to reach Kaloy's position, which would be the first to open fire.

Just a few more moments and the enemy would already be entrapped. They were noisily talking to each other while walking. Kaloy detonated a number of anti-personnel bombs which served as the signal fire.

Baking quickly positioned itself close to the road. Kaloy was delayed by some soldiers who fought back and whose positions could not be ascertained because of the darkness.

"Assault, Baking and Kaloy!" the command rang out. The fighters slowly advanced while opening fire. They continually threw improvised grenades to crush the enemy's will.

Among those that the GRP refuses to release are Donato Continente and Juanito Itaas who were captured and imprisoned because of their alleged involvement in the 1989 killing of Col. James Rowe, a "counter-insurgency" specialist from the US war in Vietnam assigned to the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) in the Philippines. The US government has strongly objected to their release despite the fact that they are entitled to parole after having been imprisoned for over 15 years.

In a similar bind are the so-called "Mamburao 6"—farmers Manolito Matricio, Eduardo Hermoso, Ruben Balaguer, Mario Tobias, Joshua Ungsod and Gelito Bautista. They have been imprisoned since 1998 on charges of killing brothers Michael and Paul Quintos in Mindoro in 1997, even as the New People's Army has openly acknowledged responsibility for meting the death penalty on the brothers because of their grave crimes against the people.

Aside from the release of the 32 detainees, one other confidence-building measure by the Arroyo regime is its commitment to find ways to ensure and hasten the indemnification of 10,000 victims of the Marcos dictatorship using the Marcoses' sequestered wealth. **AB**

## Attacks on progressive parties intensifying

**A**ttacks by the Arroyo regime and fascists on progressive candidates and parties are intensifying as the election draws near.

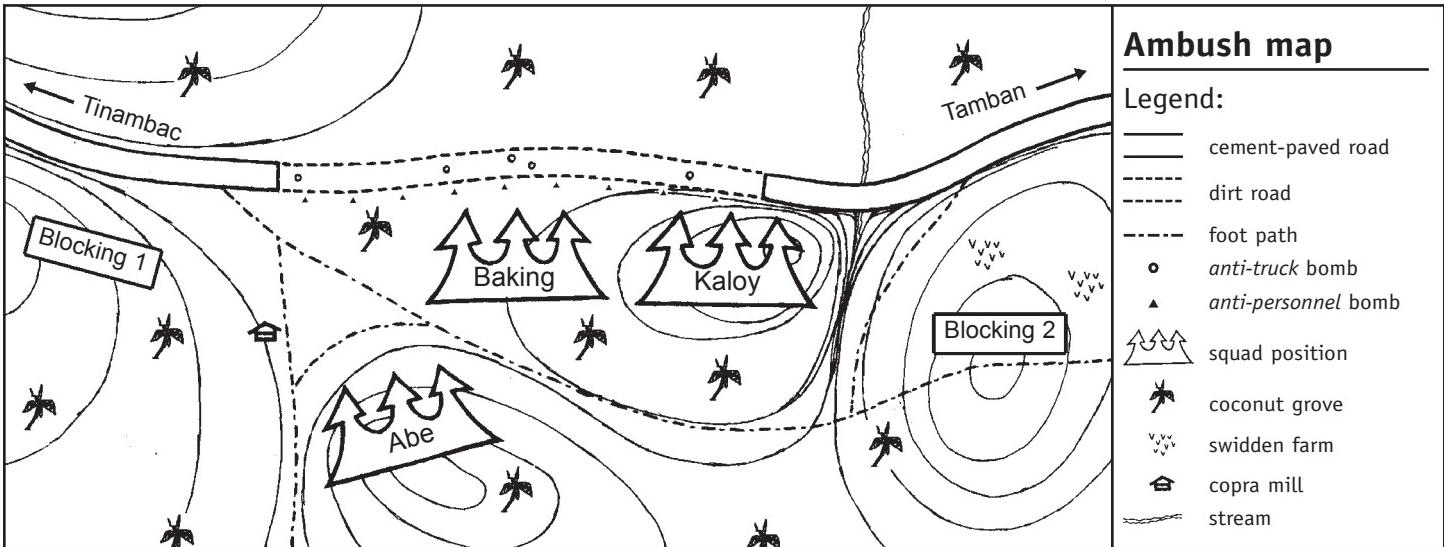
On April 2, newly designated National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales recommended that Bayan Muna (BM) and five other progressive parties—Anakpawis, Gabriela Wonen's Party, Anak ng Bayan, Migrante and Suara Bangsamoro—be disqualified. He accused BM of giving over P500 million to the New People's Army (NPA). The reactionaries are afraid that if these parties are elected, they would constitute a significant bloc in congress and become a big obstacle to the pro-imperialist and anti-people policies of the puppet reactionary government.

Malacañang and the AFP's fabricated accusations merely send signals to the state's butchers and other fascists to further their attacks on progressive candidates and parties. Up to 70 BM leaders and members have been killed since the party was established in 2001, aside from those who have been abducted, harmed and harassed. Military and paramilitary forces are the culprits behind these crimes.

Progressive candidates and parties have strongly assailed and belied Gonzales' allegations. They said that unlike the reactionary government that wastes the people's money, BM has funded hundreds of day care centers, schools, artesian wells and water systems, farm-to-market roads, bridges, clinics and other projects beneficial to the people. **AB**



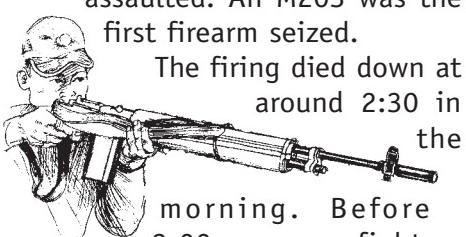
## VICTORIOUS NPA OFFENSIVES



to fight. Some flares thrown failed to ignite. Amidst the darkness, one could faintly hear the soldiers scampering away from the scene.

After a few moments, Kaloy was now pressed against the roadside. Silence once more prevailed, occasionally interrupted by the cursing and firing of the lone soldier who was left fighting.

At around 2:15, the comrades assaulted. An M203 was the first firearm seized.



The firing died down at around 2:30 in the morning. Before

3:00, seven fighters from each squad were mobilized to comb the surroundings, pursue the remaining enemy forces and search for more arms to be confiscated. But the pitch darkness was a definite obstacle. The NPA command decided to let the comrades rest and wait for daybreak before proceeding with the clearing.

It was almost 6:00 in the morning when those assigned to undertake clearing operations advanced. After an hour, they cornered two soldiers not far from the scene of the fighting. The soldiers had taken

cover behind by a lone coconut tree and had spent the night there in the hope that the NPA would meantime retreat and reinforcements arrive.

The NPA advised them to surrender and to trust that they would be treated well and their human rights respected and that they would receive medical attention if they were wounded. Immediately, 42nd IB "C" company commander Lt. Ronaldo Fedelino and Pfc Ronel Lemeño emerged. They turned in an M203, an M14 and ammunition. They are at present in the custody of the NPA as prisoners of war. Three enemy troops were confirmed killed in the ambush.

**Biting the bait.** Before the victorious offensive, the NPA laid down a ruse. On February 27, some comrades intentionally made their presence known in the center of Tamban, a large barangay in Tinambac with a major port serving as a passageway for people from four towns in Camarines Sur. A detachment of the 42nd IB had just left the barrio in December 2003, leaving the barangay teeming with enemy intelligence agents.

The comrades talked to some allies in the barrio and took to task and warned some residents who

were collaborating with the enemy. They set up checkpoints for two days about five kilometers from the ambush site and just a few hundred meters from Tamban, stopping all vehicles coming from Tamban headed towards Naga City. They explained to every one that passed the revolutionary movement's stand regarding the coming elections. Another objective for setting up the checkpoints was to confiscate firearms from any armed enemy personnel they might chance upon.

The comrades confronted two CAFGU personnel at the checkpoint who immediately reported the incident to the AFP camp in Mananao, Tinambac. The military responded at midnight on February 29, and 14 soldiers who joined the strike operation fell into the trap.

**Like a fiesta.** The Red fighters were joyously greeted by the masses in the barrios they had passed on their retreat on the morning of March 1. At a temporary stopover, a steady stream of visitors came to extend their warm congratulations. The masses were also preoccupied with cooking for the large number of troops that launched the tactical

*Continued on "Ambush...," page 7*

# Victorious offensives launched in Eastern Visayas

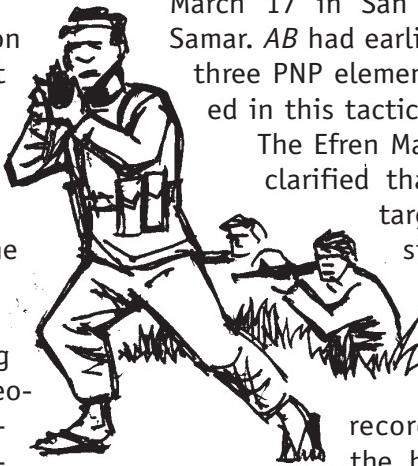
**G**uerrillas of the New People's Army (NPA) Mt. Amandewin Command in Leyte raided and destroyed the drilling facilities of the Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC) in Ormoc City on March 26.

The military operation was carried out without firing a single shot. The Red fighters ensured the safety of all of the civilian employees of the PNOC, including the security guards.

The PNOC was punished for not recognizing the authority of the people's revolutionary government, for not complying with its taxation policy, for grabbing land from the people and for not having any program to ensure that their drilling project does not harm the people and the environment.

The NPA confiscated an M16, two shotguns and 17 M203 grenades aside from M16 ammunition. Eight troops of the PNP Regional Mobile Group who were among those in pursuit of the NPA were killed when the Red fighters ambushed them.

Meanwhile, according to the most recent reports from the Efren



Martires Command of the NPA in Eastern Visayas, 13 soldiers of the 34th IB and one policeman were killed in a simultaneous raid on a PNP detachment and ambush on troops of the Philippine Army on March 17 in San Jose de Buan, Samar. AB had earlier reported that three PNP elements were wounded in this tactical offensive.

The Efren Martires Command clarified that the principal target of the offensive was the 34th IB Alpha company because of its brutal record of violating the human rights of the people of Samar. Included among the violations of this enemy unit are the

- ▶ Murder of Fulgencio Gabin, 60, in Barangay Gusa, San Jose de Buan on June 6, 2003 and Jossie Cabarles in Barangay Totorinan, Catbalogan on November 25, 2003 for being suspected supporters of the NPA.
- ▶ Desecration of the remains of Carlito "Ka Terado" Salingsing, who was beheaded after being killed in an encounter on July 23, 2003 in Barangay Naguma, Calbayog City, Samar.

- ▶ Abduction and torture of suspected NPA supporters and beating up of civilians during military operations.
- ▶ Forcible use of peasants as workers in military camps.
- ▶ Wanton destruction of the masses' crops and killing of their farm animals during military operations.
- ▶ Masterminding illegal logging and colluding with illegal loggers in Barangay Buray, Paranas and Catbalogan.
- ▶ Leading decadent and anti-social activities, such as gambling, drunkenness and other crimes in barrios near their camps.

The Efren Martires Command also reported that Red fighters prevailed in two defensive actions in Leyte and Eastern Samar.

In Leyte province, nine elements of the 19th IB were killed when the NPA seized the initiative from the soldiers who attacked an NPA camp in Barangay Wague, Leyte town on March 2. A Red fighter was killed in the fighting. The other NPA guerrillas were able to retreat safely.

In Dolores, Eastern Samar, 15 Red fighters of the Lupito Mingote Command were able to get the better of attacking troops from the 14th IB Bravo company on February 18. Five soldiers were killed—two in fighting against the NPA and three in a misencounter with their confused co-soldiers. AB

*"Ambush...," from page 6*

offensive.

The prisoner Pfc Lemeño was amazed at the warm camaraderie and unity of the masses and the people's army. "So this is what it's like when you come together," he said, "it's like a fiesta."

While retreating, the comrades made sure to talk to and discuss with the captives the policies of the revolutionary movement regarding the treatment of prisoners and the process of their release. They also held discussions on a number of political issues and shared stories regarding their families and lives.

AB



## Use of civilians as human shields denounced

The New People's Army Efren Martires Command in Eastern Visayas denounced the Philippine National Police's (PNP) use of civilians as shields in an encounter that occurred on March 26 in Barangay Lake Danao, Ormoc City, Leyte.

In a statement issued April 1, Jose Sumoroy, the command's spokesperson, denounced the PNP for purposely letting three employees of the Philippine National Oil Corp. (PNOC) join their convoy even though they knew they would encounter the NPA.

The PNP and the reactionary military are aware that the NPA does not embroil civilians in its conduct of armed struggle. The NPA strictly complies with international humanitarian law and international war conventions aside from its own policies and those of the Party and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines against inflicting harm on civilians.

The policemen hoped that if they were accompanied by three civilians, the NPA would hesitate to ambush their troops.

The Red fighters of the Mount Amandewin Command were not aware that there were civilians in the convoy sent by the PNP to the PNOC. Because of this, Aldrine Alcober, Jerry Flores and Jaime Celeste, all employees of the PNOC, were caught in the crossfire and killed. The Efren Martires Command expressed its profound sadness at the PNP's reckless endangerment of these civilians. It also extended its sincere condolences and its readiness to help the bereaved families.

The command also called on the AFP and the PNP to respect the rights of innocent civilians and to abide by the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). It assailed the military and police for forcibly using civilians as guides in operations or ordering them to position themselves at the forefront of their troops. This is aside from bombing communities and perpetrating extrajudicial killings, abductions, torture and other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

AB

## Resisting the RSOT in Eastern Visayas



One of the principal means currently employed by the enemy in its attempt to crush the New People's Army (NPA) and destroy the revolutionary mass base is to launch operations of the Reengineered Special Operations Teams (RSOT).

The RSOT is the third version of the Special Operations Teams (SOT) that the reactionary state unleashed in the 1990s. When the first version of the SOT failed to destroy the revolutionary movement, it was launched once more and dubbed Modified Special Operations Teams or MSOT. When this also failed, it was relaunched and dubbed the "reengineered" or "refashioned" SOT.

RSOT operations are marked by the concentration of a large number of military forces in barrios suspected of being bulwarks of the revolutionary movement. The RSOT focuses on key barrios and adjacent areas, usually using an enlarged platoon or company-strength force which goes on rotation in order to continually carry out operations over an extended period. The RSOT usually stays from six months to a year in the cluster of barrios it concentrates on.

While they are in these barrios, they strengthen intelligence operations to identify active guerrillas of the NPA, their lines of communication and support, their mobilizable forces and their arms caches. They also launch civil-military operations (CMO) to deceive and destroy mass organizations and goad the latter's members into turning their backs on the revolution.

While the RSOT forces deployed in the barrios launch intelligence operations and CMO, they also have mobile forces that comb the surroundings and launch combat operations against the NPA. The forces assigned for combat operations are far bigger in number than those for RSOT and CMO work.



**The NPA confronts the SOT in Eastern Visayas.** In the latter half of 2003, the Party organization in Eastern Visayas (EV) summed up its rich experience in confronting and frustrating the RSOT.

Overall, its assessment shows that resistance against the RSOT in EV has been successful. Particularly in the province of Northern Samar, the revolutionary mass base has remained intact and strong despite the intense deception and cruelty that the enemy has unleashed to destroy it. Instead of the enemy deodorizing itself and becoming close to the people, it has grown more isolated and its fascist character further exposed. The enemy has also been unable to launch any successful attack against the NPA simultaneous with its RSOT operations. On the contrary, it is the enemy that has sustained casualties due to tactical offensives launched by Red fighters.

**Strong tactical leadership by the Party.** The key in frustrating the RSOT in EV is maintaining the active tactical leadership of the Party's territorial committees in areas affected by the RSOT. The Party's leading organs at the provincial, front and section levels cooperate with one another to direct, centralize and coordinate the various plans and actions against the RSOT.

In outlining the program to confront the RSOT, the Party first makes a clear analysis of how it has been proceeding. Considering that the RSOT is carried out in guerrilla front level and may spill over to other fronts, the anti-RSOT campaign plan is drafted at the provincial level. The plan is comprehensive and includes the combination of political and military, armed and unarmed, secret and open means, and calls for coordinated action

between guerrilla fronts and white areas. Based on the plans outlined by the provinces, corresponding plans are made at the front and section levels.

The section committees are the most directly affected, and thus bear the heaviest responsibility for frustrating the RSOT in their respective areas. They must sharply set the correct tasks and deployment of guerrilla units.

In instances where the NPA can still operate in militarized areas, the guerrilla units maximize their initiative and flexibility, remain in the areas, and persevere in their tasks with the help of the masses. This way, the guerrilla units are tempered and trained to carry out



their tasks in the face of danger.

In times of enemy operations, the task of ensuring the security of the guerrilla units becomes more important. Therefore, they strictly adhere to rules on clandestine operations, secure basing and other similar security policies. The NPA must also establish its own intelligence network in the barrios and municipalities and even within enemy detachments to constantly receive precise and updated information on the enemy's plans and actions.

**The role of local Party branches and mass organizations.** Because the RSOT is implemented at the barrio level, a critical part of resisting the RSOT is strengthening the local Party branches and mass organizations. The biggest victories against the RSOT have been

achieved and the most minor damage inflicted in areas where Party branches and mass organizations actively operated.

In instances where it is necessary to shift the concentration of NPA operations outside the RSOT operations area, it is imperative to avoid overestimating the danger involved and having guerrilla units shift too far away from the original areas of operation, impairing their ability to maintain links with the masses. It is important to guarantee smooth communication and ensure that the local Party branches and mass organizations receive continual guidance. This way, the section committee can still assist the branch and the mass organizations, and gather information about the conduct of the RSOT in the area.

**Barrio self-defense.** After achieving the unity of the branch and mass organizations on how to view and respond to the RSOT, concrete steps are taken at the barrio level to defend the village. Families of fulltime comrades face the biggest risk of being pressured and harassed by the enemy, so they are assisted in preparing for possible enemy investigation and repression. Children are also properly oriented because it is they who are often approached and deceived by the enemy to extract information. The Party branch and mass organizations also elicit the cooperation of barangay leaders and councils in waging action to defend barrio folk victimized by military abuses.

The Party branch also mobilizes the people's militia to ensure the safety of comrades and activists in the barrio whose identities have been pinpointed, monitor enemy actions, and provide updated reports and information to the guerrilla unit operating in the area. Comrades closely monitor identified



or suspected informers, talk to them, and attempt to neutralize them to prevent them from being used by the enemy. Others are persuaded to leave the area temporarily.

As a result of these measures, the enemy has been unable to pinpoint and destroy the Party branches and mass organizations in the barrio. Comrades and activists targeted by the enemy have been secured. And the enemy was likewise unable to recruit new informers and CAFGU forces.

**Broad and strong mass movement.** An effective weapon against the RSOT is a broad and strong mass movement that employs legal and illegal, open and secret forms of mobilization. It is an important tool for tempering the masses' fighting spirit to defend their rights and interests and advance the revolution.

In Eastern Visayas, a successful open campaign involved gathering the signatures of thousands of people from 112 barrios and 14 municipalities for a petition calling for the RSOT's ouster. Delegations and dialogues were also launched and participated in by 100 people's representatives from 75 barrios and 13 municipalities. Press statements were released to the mass media, mass meetings called, complaints and cases filed in court, and campaigns and mass action launched to secure the release of persons abducted by the military.

Alliance work further expanded through open and legal mass actions. A large number of people were mobilized not only from the basic masses but also from the ranks of the middle forces, local government officials and other sectors. Broad unity was achieved against intense military abuses, dislocations in livelihood and destruction of property wrought by the RSOT.

**Tactical offensives and other military actions.** Actually, RSOT operations provide the NPA with favorable opportunities to launch military actions. Since it is no longer necessary to venture far to engage the enemy, the masses firmly demand that the people's army deal blows on enemy units already inside revolutionary territory. Aside from the objective of seizing arms, these offensives constitute a strong insult to an enemy that boasts before the masses of having wiped out the NPA. Our attacks on the RSOT help greatly in thwarting the enemy's mobility and pave the way for the early termination of RSOT operations.

In Eastern Visayas, special partisan operations have been successfully carried out in coordination with tactical offensives launched on regular units of the enemy during RSOT operations. The punitive action in January 2003 on Maj. Danilo Bilion, the 803rd Brigade operations chief based in Northern Samar and the province's most notorious human rights violator, was an important military measure. Bilion was directly responsible for many cases of torture and murder since the days when he led SOT operations as an officer of the 19th IB in the early 1990s. He was particularly notorious for torturing and raping women during military operations. Bilion's punishment imbued with fervor the masses in the entire province. Some enemy forces were also neutralized and won over as a result.

## Firefight in Cagayan Valley

Nine soldiers of the 45th IB and 53rd Reconnaissance Company were killed in a firefight with NPA guerrillas in Barangay Dicamay Uno, Jones, Isabela on March 19. A 15-strong AFP troop was on patrol at around 6 a.m. when spotted by an NPA platoon under the Benito Tesorio Command that had temporarily encamped in the area. The Red fighters immediately made plans to ambush them.

The fighting began at about 6:30 a.m. and lasted for two hours. The remaining enemy troops hid in the thick woods so they were not completely wiped out.

Even if the guerrillas had long left the area, a far bigger AFP troop that was just positioned nearby failed to assist the embattled soldiers due to intense fear.

The AFP rescued the embattled troops at around 5 p.m. but only after two Tora-Tora planes bombed the scene of the encounter and a Huey helicopter strafed it. They quickly picked up their dead and wounded to prevent the masses from seeing them.

The embattled troops were part of six platoons that had been conducting a military operation in the municipalities of Jones and Echague for a week before the fighting. The operation was the 5th Infantry Division's response to an NPA disarming operation against Isabela Congressman Giorgidi Aggabao, a relative of Danding Cojuangco and a close ally of Gov. Faustino "Junior" Dy. Also among those disarmed were two mayors, a provincial board member and their bodyguards.

The military operation also tried to stem the flow of electoral candidates applying for Permits-to-Campaign from the people's democratic government. The soldiers have likewise been harassing members of legal progressive parties and other organizations and individuals working against the Dy dynasty in Isabela. The

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## NPA in Mindanao gains strength and expands

The forces of the New People's Army (NPA) in Mindanao continue to grow stronger and are expected to surpass the gains they achieved in 2003.

In a statement on March 29, the Communist Party of the Philippines Mindanao Commission said that the NPA has been able to expand to 2,000 barrios or 20% of the total 10,021 barrios in Mindanao. NPA guerrilla units and organs of political power are now in place in over 200 cities and municipalities in 19 provinces in the country's second largest island. Of the 128 guerrilla fronts nationwide, 39 of them are in Mindanao.

The NPA in Mindanao was able to launch over 100 tactical offensives in 2003, all of them victorious. Some of the more brilliant tactical offensives were the assaults on the detachment of the Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines (PICOP) in Bislig, Surigao del Sur; in Carmen, Agusan del Norte; in San Luis, Agusan del Sur; in San Fernando, Bukidnon; and in San Miguel, Zamboanga del Sur.

About 200 high-powered rifles were confiscated from the ambushes and raids launched, aside from ammunition and military equipment seized. The biggest number were 92 rifles confiscated from the PICOP armory in March 2003. Soldiers sympathetic to the revolutionary movement also contributed arms and ammunition, such as those turned over by two soldiers of the Philippine Army 29th IB in Agusan del Sur.

Because of the growth of organized communities, the number of defensive actions involving NPA units has decreased. In cases where Red fighters found themselves in defensive situations, they have been able to maneuver adroitly to defeat far larger enemy formations and prevail even in drawn out encounters such as the one that took place in New Bataan, Compostela Valley on June 30. Twelve high-powered firearms were confiscated and 10 soldiers killed when the NPA seized the initiative from an attacking platoon of the 60th IB. □B

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military has been openly campaigning for Governor Dy and his underlings.

The Dy family has long controlled reactionary politics in Isabela. Aside from Gov. "Junior" Dy, among the Dys who wield power in the province are Mayor Caesar Dy of Cauayan City and Congressman Faustino Dy III of the 3rd district of Isabela. □B



**Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos,  
NDFF-Mindanao spokesperson**

## Failed privatization

This March, the motivations behind the Arroyo regime's deal with the Lopez family to save its companies from incurring continued losses and further boost their profits have been completely laid bare. Since last year, the regime has been repeatedly bailing out various Lopez-owned firms under their lead companies First Philippine Holdings Corporation and Benpres Holdings. Among them are Bayantel, Meralco, First Philippine Infrastructure Development Corporation (FPIDC) and Maynilad Water Services, Inc.

The government has bailed out the ailing Maynilad in a brazen agreement with the Lopez family in exchange for support and funds for Arroyo's candidacy and continued rule. It is a stark illustration of the collusion of imperialists, the comprador big bourgeoisie and big bureaucrat capitalists to protect their self interests and further squeeze the people dry.

The government bailout of Maynilad comes in the form of an outright purchase of the company through a "debt-to-equity" swap arrangement between the Lopezes and the government. Maynilad is a company owned by the Lopezes and the imperialist Suez-Onde group of France that was granted a concession to provide water services to western Metro Manila.

Under this agreement, Benpres is no longer obligated to pay for P8 billion in concessions fees that it owes. In exchange for cancelling this debt, 61% of Maynilad stocks held by Benpres will be ceded to the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the government agency that oversees water services.

Benpres has even been able to "gain" some P3.4 billion from this deal because its capital input for Maynilad comes to a mere P4.6 billion.

Aside from this, the P6.4 billion that Maynilad illegally charged consumers, and that the Lopezes and Suez-Onde pocketed in the last three years will no longer be returned to the public. The Lopezes and Suez-Onde will also be relieved of other debt obligations since 1999 amounting to P11 billion. It is the government that will

assume all of these obligations.

Both Benpres and Suez-Ondeo deny turning Maynilad into a milking cow when they managed it, and refuse to accept responsibility for the company's debt-ridden state. But according to the company's own records, Maynilad's overall debt came to P19.1 billion while its recorded assets were worth only P16.9 billion as of December 2003. From 1997 to 2001, Benpres and Suez-Ondeo incurred unexplained expenses of up to P800 million. From 1999 to 2000, Maynilad paid P1.2 billion for the services of consultants and managers that Benpres Holdings and Suez-Ondeo assigned to Maynilad. Maynilad's computers and other equipment were also all contracted from companies owned by the Suez group.

But even if it is the government that has completely shoudered the costs of bailing out the ailing companies, it is Benpres Holdings that will continue managing them. Suez-Ondeo, the Lopezes' foreign business partners, will continue to control 19% of Maynilad's stocks. Benpres and Suez-Ondeo will continue squeezing funds from Maynilad through the large bills for the services of the consultants and managers they have assigned to Maynilad.

The Maynilad debt assumed by government will be passed on to the people. To pay for the debts it has assumed, the government will increase water service rates by up to 32%. This is in addition to the 227% increase in charges since Maynilad began handling water services in 1997. Meanwhile, rates charged by the Manila Water Company, a company owned by the comprador Ayala family, Bechtel-International Water of the US, United Utilities of the UK, and the Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan, which handles the water concession for eastern Metro Manila, have been hiked 350%. The growing cost of water services runs counter to the promise by imperialists and the puppet regime that privatization and deregulation will reduce water service costs.

In the face of all this, the privatization of water services has not brought about any good. Contrary to Maynilad's claims, up to 43% of Metro Manila still does not have continuous and efficient water service, while 1.5 million people in Metro Manila do not even have access to any water service.

When the government privatized the MWSS in 1997, it was dubbed the biggest example of public services privatization.

Developments since then have exposed the failure of all of the vaunted benefits of the policies of privatization, denationalization, deregulation and liberalization. They show how foreign capitalists and their local accomplices in business and in the reactionary government have actually been bleeding the ailing economy and the impoverished Filipino people. **AB**

## MERALCO takes a second stab

YET another ailing Lopez family company is crying out for a bailout by the Arroyo regime. Recently, the Lopez family warned that there would be a widespread energy shortage should MERALCO not be allowed to increase electricity service rates. MERALCO is the Lopez family-controlled leading company providing electricity service.

The Lopezes want the government to remove the 40-centavo per kilowatt-hour ceiling on power purchased adjustment (PPA) charges, which constitute the principal source of MERALCO's profits.

The Lopezes also want the complete deregulation of electricity purchases by all electric companies from independent power producers (IPP). This is their response to strong criticisms of current arrangements where MERALCO buys energy from companies also owned by the Lopezes.

## 75-centavo additional fare, deceptive and divisive

DRIVERS and operators rejected as deceptive and divisive the Arroyo government's offer of a 75-centavo fare increase one day before protest actions set for March 30 and 31. A transport stoppage launched in many cities and towns nationwide paralyzed public transportation on these dates.

The Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operatoryor Nationwide (PISTON) assailed the fare increase for being short of the P1.50 additional fare demanded, and for its applicability only on vehicles plying routes five kilometers and longer. Thus, many drivers plying shorter routes would not be able to avail of any additional fare. The strikers charged that its only purpose is to divide the ranks of drivers and operators.

Up to 80-95% of transportation was paralyzed in Baguio City, Angeles City, all of Bulacan, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), a number of towns and cities in Bicol and Western Visayas and in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Talisay. In Mindanao, the strike lasted up to two days in all cities, except Zamboanga City.